

New Jersey Conservation Partnership Congressional Report • March 2026

Hamer Germplasm Sea Oats

An environmental ally four decades in the making

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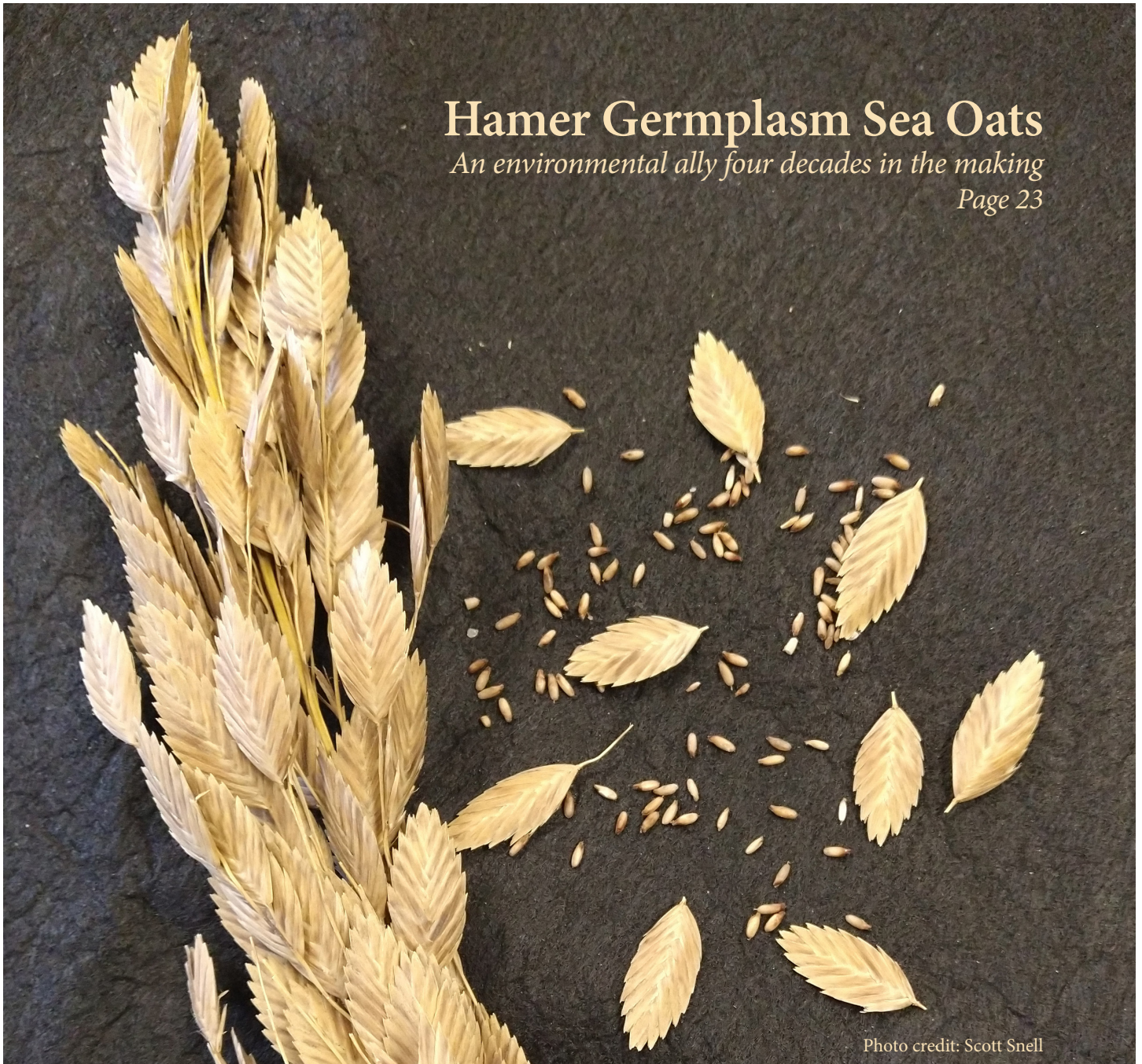


Photo credit: Scott Snell

New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
New Jersey Department of Agriculture
State Soil Conservation Committee



New Jersey Conservation Partnership

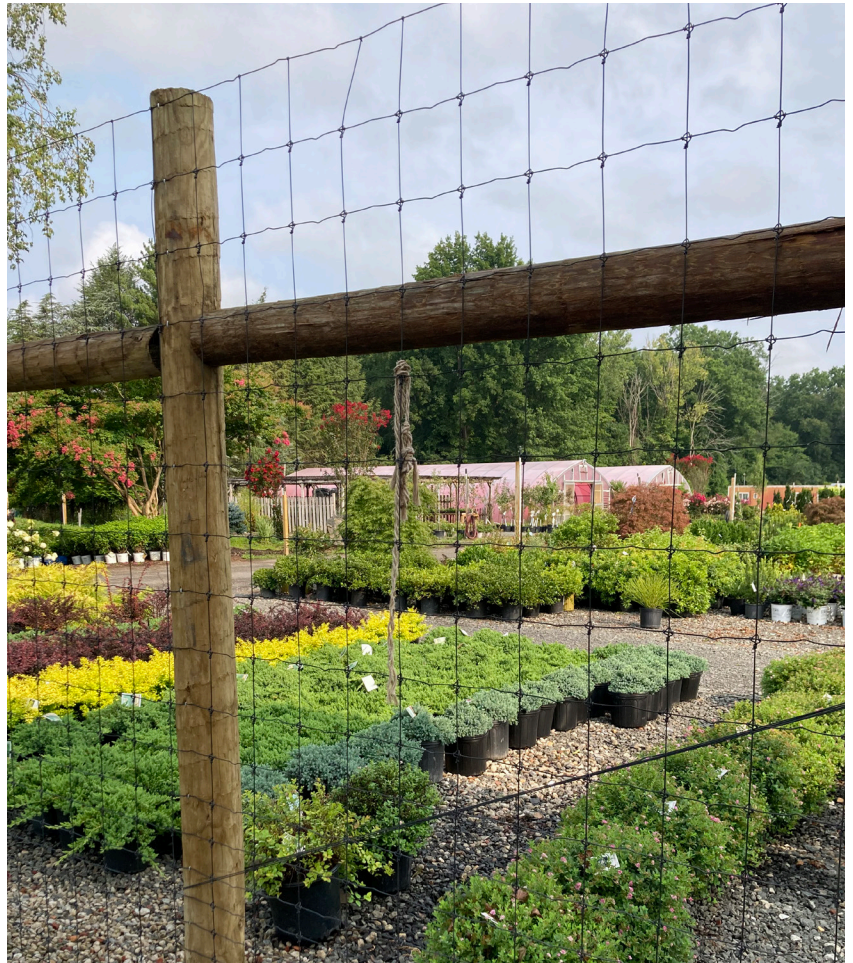
Vision:

Leadership promoting stewardship of New Jersey's natural resources.

Mission:

Protect the natural resources of New Jersey and meet the conservation needs of its residents.

Through the New Jersey Conservation Partnership, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) State Soil Conservation Committee, the Soil Conservation Districts, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and others have been working cooperatively for over 85 years. Promoting resource conservation activities on suburban, urban, and agricultural lands, the NJ Soil Conservation Districts and NRCS work together to address soil erosion issues on most of New Jersey's acres, helping to protect our valuable fields, our natural waterways, and our ecosystems. Beyond this legacy partnership, we work cooperatively with many other conservation partners to protect the natural resources of our great state. These partners include the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), Rutgers University, the Department of Forestry, the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the National Audubon Society, and the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils.



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts

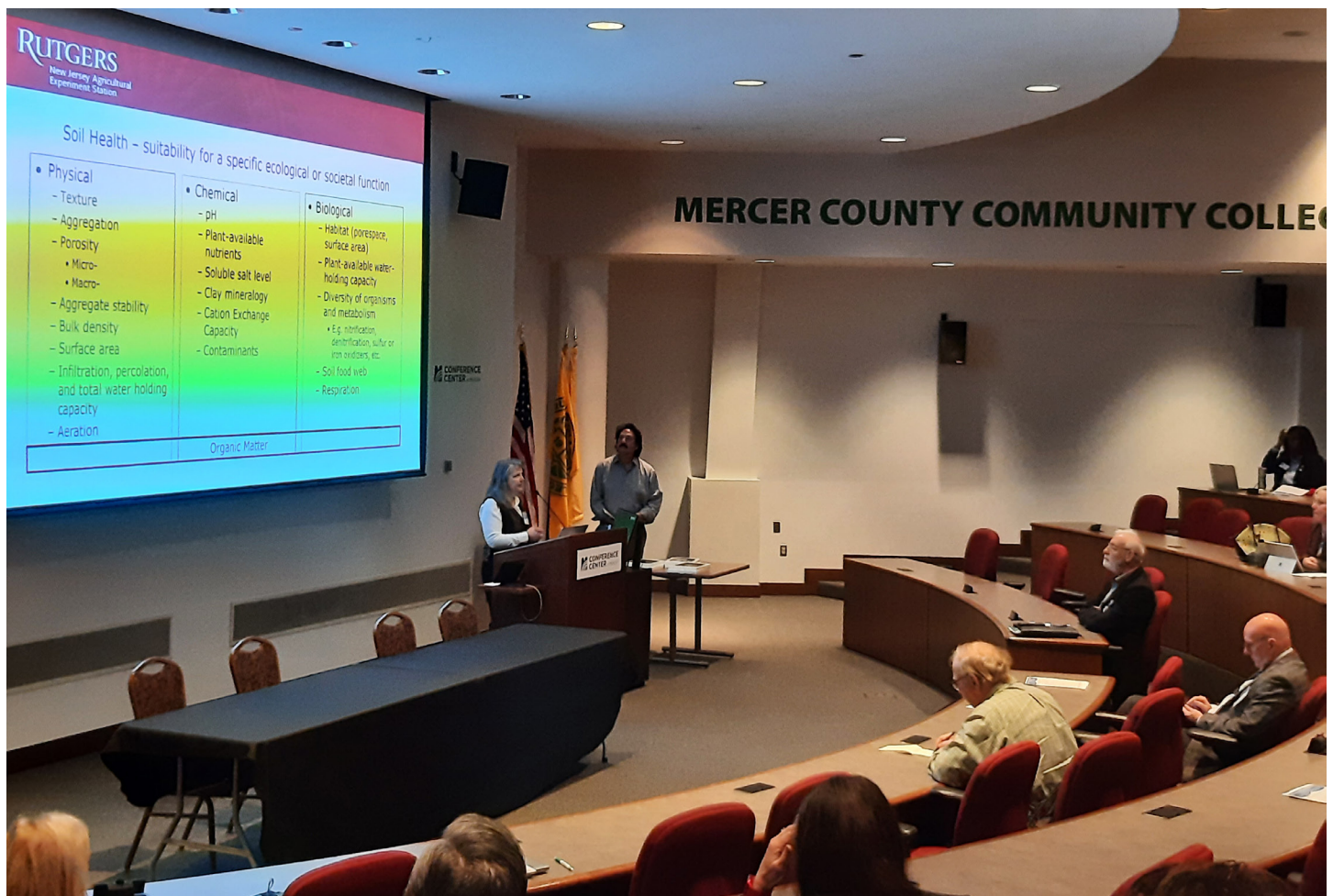
Soil Conservation Districts in New Jersey

As a qualified nonprofit 501c(3) organization, NJACD plays an important role in statewide and national conservation programs for the Soil Conservation Districts, as well as the general public. NJACD provides support and service in the development of statewide conservation education, leadership and professional programs. It is an important link to national organizations like the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), just to name a few.



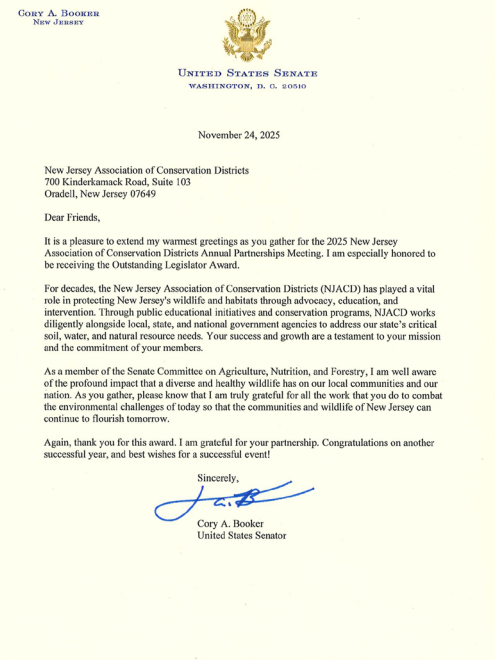
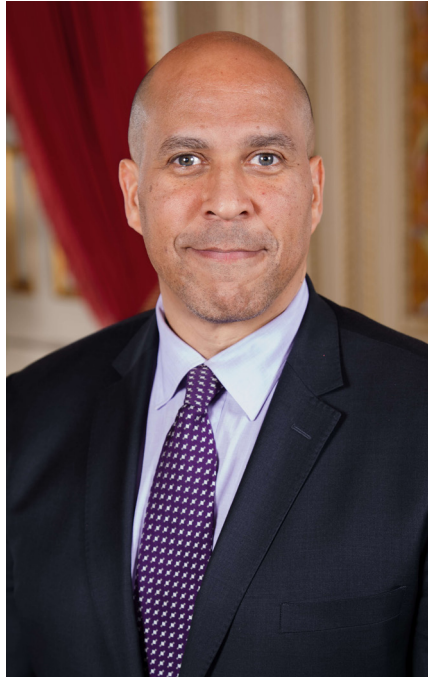
NJ Annual Conservation Partnership Meeting

The New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts convenes an Annual Conservation Partnership Meeting, bringing together partner representatives to exchange technical presentations, engineering updates, and program administration insights. This collaborative forum is designed to advance effective management of local natural resources.



The New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts presented the following Achievement Awards.

2025 Outstanding Legislator Award: The Hudson Essex Passaic District nominated United States Senator Cory Booker for his climate change initiatives, advocacy for biodiversity, and ongoing engagement with New Jersey Districts on natural resource issues. Senator Booker and his team worked closely with New Jersey agriculture producers in 2025 to ensure conservation program initiatives were met and enhanced. His office continues to work cooperatively with NJACD to capture local level resource concerns and solutions.

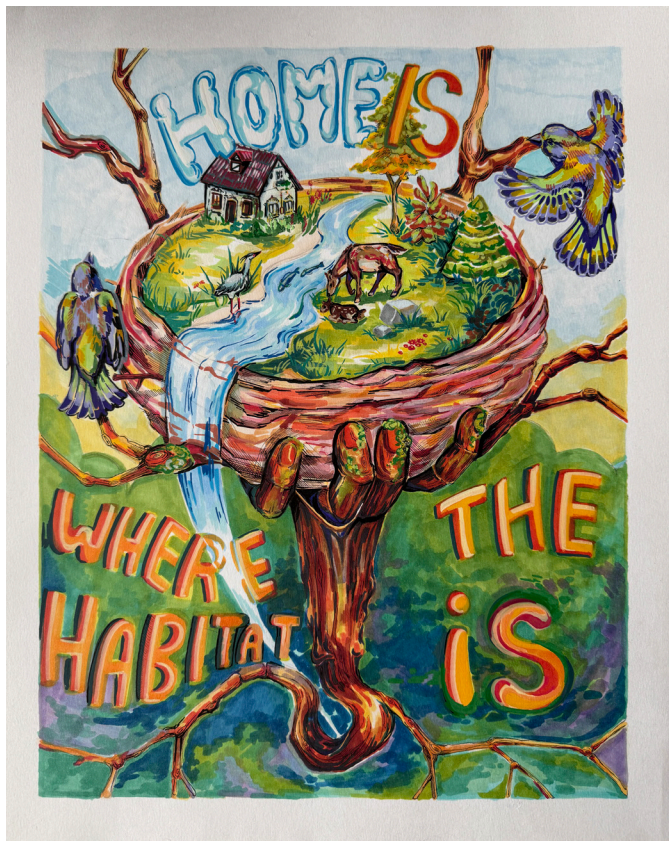


2025 Outstanding Builder: Echo Lake Dog Park. The Union County Improvement Authority collaborated with the Somerset-Union District to ensure stabilization of a challenging, hilly project. Despite public demand for opening, they prioritized conservation standards. The park now serves as a valued community asset.



The annual National Conservation Poster Contest provides students in second through twelfth grade an opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water and related natural resource issues through art. It also highlights the educational outreach efforts of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies. The 2025 New Jersey Conservation Poster Theme was “Home is Where the Habitat Is.”

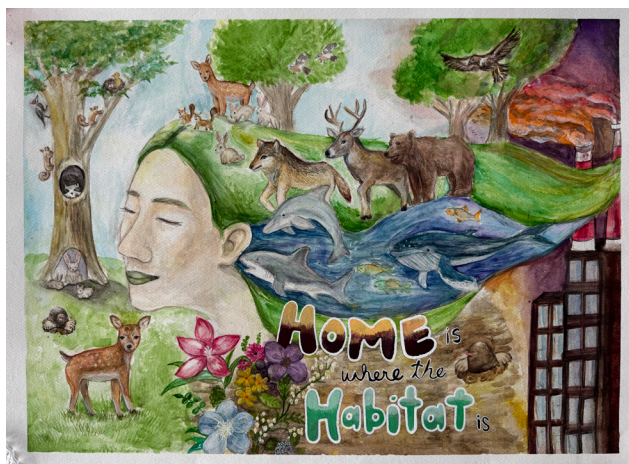
Each year, the poster contest starts at the district level. District winners advance to the state level. Cash prizes of \$100, \$50, and \$25 are awarded to first, second, and third place winners. Finally, state winners advance to the National Contest. National winners are recognized each year at the NACD Annual Meeting.



Emily Wang (Grades 10-12) Mercer SCD.



Yunshi Chen (Grades 7-9) Mercer SCD.



Sarang Lee (Grades 4-6) Bergen SCD.



Olivia Zhang (Grades 2-3) Somerset Union SCD

New Jersey Envirothon

International Environmental Competition for High School Students

The New Jersey Envirothon competition is a one-day event that takes place at the end of the school year. Teams are tested on environmental topics through hands-on interactive problem-solving at six testing stations. Test questions may cover any information in the study guide and suggested resource materials like web materials and links. The contest consists of hands-on questions along with some true/false, multiple choice and fill-in-the-blanks. There are 30 minutes allowed at each station. Team presentations last 10 minutes.

The team that best demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of natural resources, as well as teamwork and communication skills, moves on to represent New Jersey in the NCF Envirothon competition which is North America's largest High School Environmental Education Competition. This multi-day event further tests the team's understanding of the environment and involves teams from all regions of the United States, Canada, China, and Singapore.



The 2025 NJ Envirothon was held at the Burlington County Soil Conservation District in Columbus, New Jersey.



High school teams from around New Jersey competed in the Envirothon.

The Local Conservation Connection

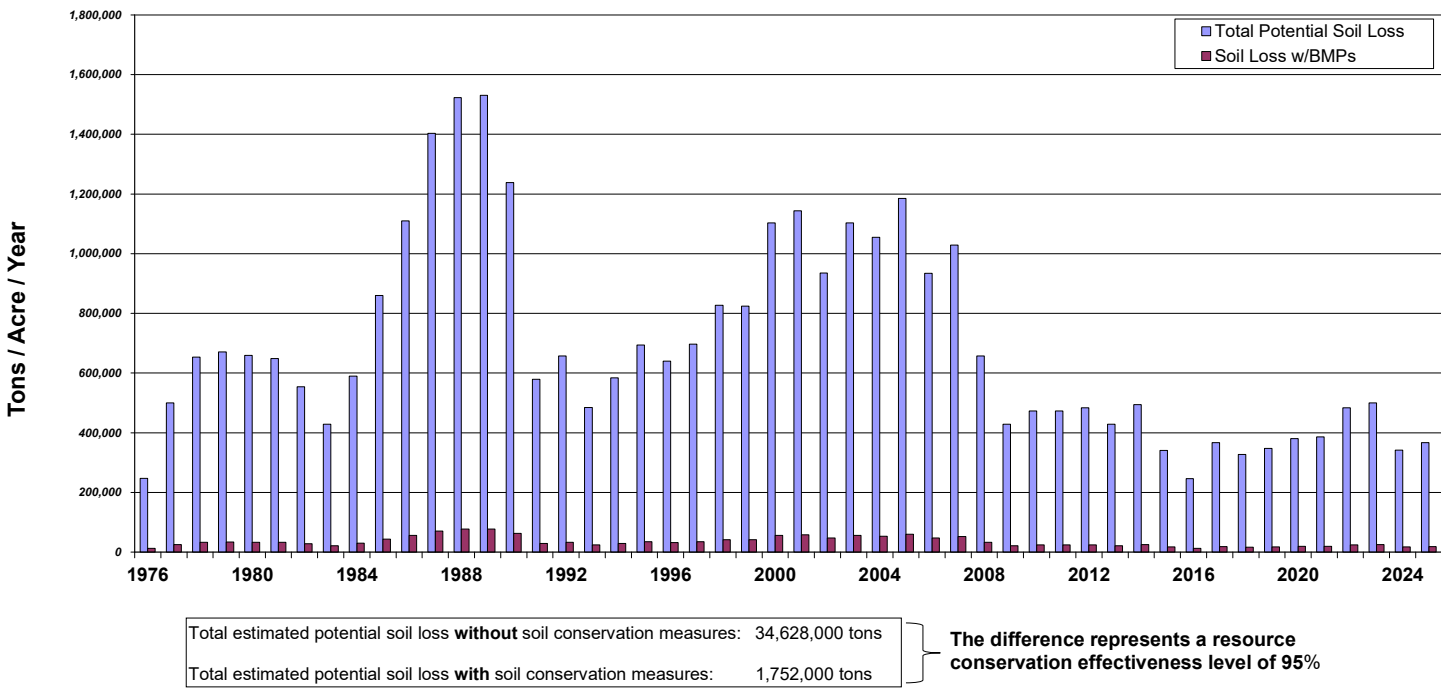
Soil Conservation Districts in New Jersey

Soil Conservation Districts were established in the 1930s as local government units and play a strong role in protecting New Jersey’s natural resources. A broad range of conservation services and assistance related to nonpoint source pollution prevention is available through the 13 districts. Districts help state and federal partners connect with their constituents and focus on local conservation issues.



In 2025 New Jersey Soil Conservation Districts processed 6,439 Soil Erosion and Sediment Control applications to ensure that over 11,267 acres disturbed through construction activities were managed appropriately, ensuring soil erosion and sediment losses were minimized at these sites. District staff reported 56,472 inspections (108,814 staff hours) to ensure compliance with the New Jersey Soil Erosion and Sediment Act, Chapter 251, P.L. 1975.

**New Jersey's Soil Resources Protected Through Urban Conservation
1976 - 2025**



Local Program Highlights

Conservation districts, established under state law, are local units of government tasked with managing natural resources at the county level. These districts collaborate with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on both private and public lands across the United States.

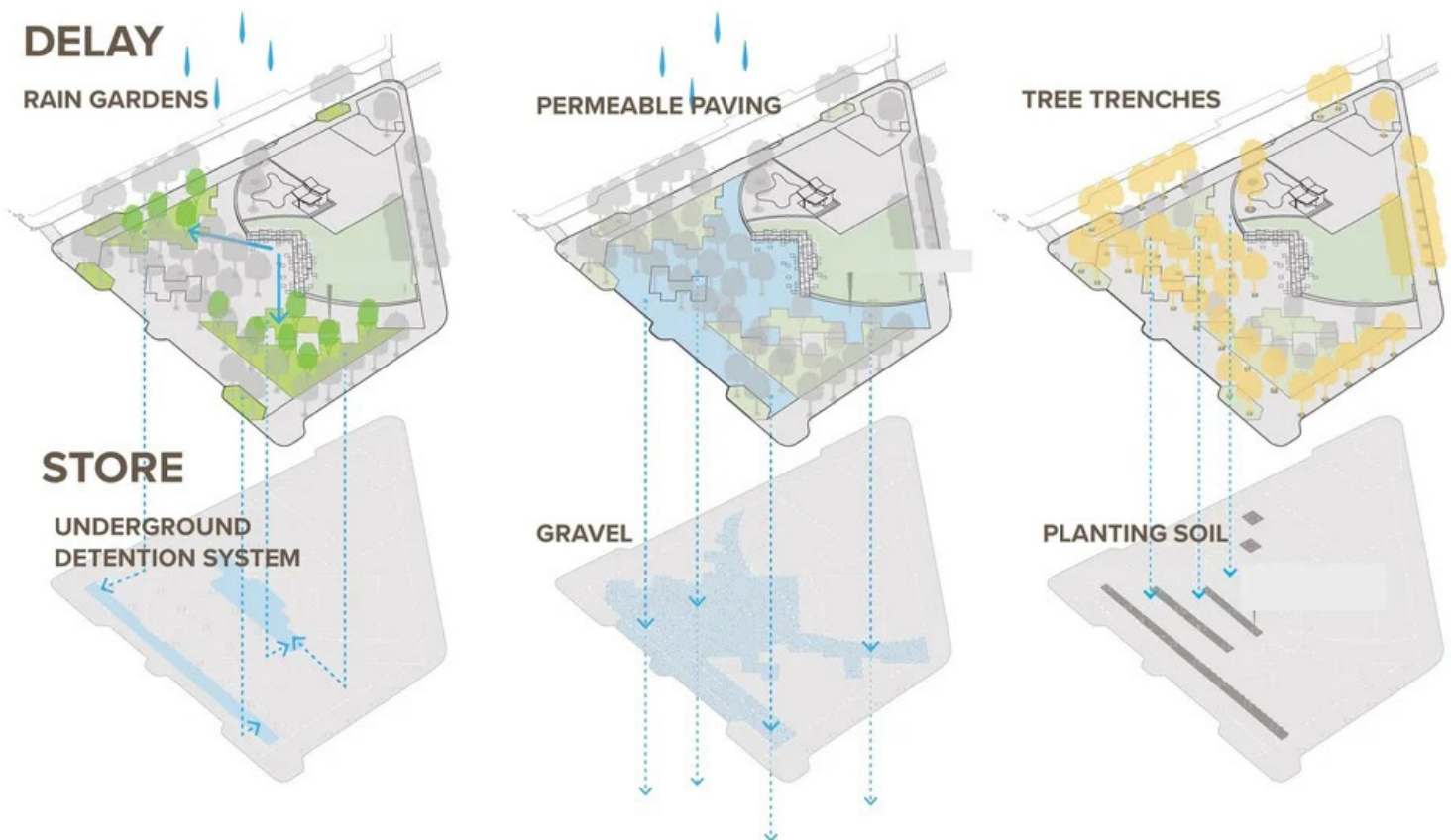
In New Jersey, conservation districts provide a wide range of services to their county constituents. From monitoring erosion control issues to offering conservation education opportunities, identifying agricultural production needs, and assisting with environmental compliance programs, these districts consistently strive to meet the community's needs.

The conservation districts in New Jersey maintain a dedicated staff of erosion control and conservation technicians. Their primary responsibilities include reviewing erosion control plans submitted by applicants and conducting on-site inspections to ensure approved practices are being followed. The district staff inspects development projects to ensure compliance with erosion control plans for residential, commercial, utility, mining, and other land grading activities.

The following are some notable projects from local conservation districts.

Hudson Essex Passaic District • 223-H-4939 Hoboken Southwest Resiliency Park Expansion

Mayor Ravi S. Bhalla, Hudson County Executive Craig Guy, Councilman Ruben Ramos, and community members gathered [September 2025] to open the expanded Southwest Resiliency Park, a project that doubles the park's size while combining recreation with stormwater management.



The new one-acre expansion includes six pickleball courts, a basketball court, a playground, picnic tables, a splash pad, swings, shade structures, restrooms, and a social plaza. Officials noted that the park design was shaped by resident input through public meetings and surveys.

In addition to recreation, the park serves as part of Hoboken's climate resiliency strategy. The expansion can detain up to 260,000 gallons of stormwater, reducing flood risk in a low-lying section of the city. Together with the original park, the site can now store up to 460,000 gallons during storms.

Images courtesy of Assemblage Landscape.



Hudson Essex Passaic District • 225-E-7541 Essex-Hudson Greenway Construction phase 1: Newark, NJ.
Placement of stabilized construction entrance. Image courtesy of NJDEP dep.nj.gov/greenway.



The Essex Hudson Greenway will traverse Montclair, Glen Ridge, Belleville, Bloomfield, Newark, Kearny, Secaucus, and Jersey City. Nine miles in length, it will replace a blighted disused rail line with a linear park for walking, biking and other non-motorized activity. The focus is on community, design, stewardship, and building infrastructure to connect communities to each other and the outdoors.

Hudson Essex Passaic District • The Gateway Tunnel Project: Newark, NJ.

Multiple projects for the Gateway Tunnel project were making progress throughout 2025. This project is critical to transportation flow, not just in New Jersey and New York, but the entire Northeast Corridor. Above is a still photo dated 11/23/2025 from the EarthCam.



Construction of the launch box at the tunnel portal in New Jersey. Image courtesy of GatewayProgram.org.

Kean-Ocean Students Learn About NJ Soil Erosion Control Standards and the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project

OCSCD's Brittany Moore, Ben Hayden, and SJRC&D's Eileen Miller shared their expertise in soil conservation with Kean University students enrolled in Principles of Environmental Soil Science, led by Professor Becky Laboy. Through presentations and a field trip, students learned how New Jersey's Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Standards are applied at construction sites, and how stormwater basins support soil, water, and ecosystem health.

The day started with an overview of the New Jersey Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act, which requires erosion control measures for projects disturbing more than 5,000 square feet. The Act's 32 Vegetative and Engineering Standards aim to prevent soil loss and protect water quality.

Students not only learned about controlling soil erosion but also discovered why well-maintained stormwater basins are essential. If these basins become compacted or filled with sediment, they cannot manage runoff properly, which can cause erosion, flooding, and poor water absorption. The class explored retrofitting failing basins by planting native seeds. Deep-rooted native grasses and flowering perennials help loosen the soil at the bottom of basins, making it easier for water to soak in. These plants also offer valuable habitats for wildlife like Monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

Following the presentations, students joined a guided field trip to active construction sites in Ocean County. Ms. Moore, Mr. Hayden, and Ms. Miller shared their expertise on using erosion control methods to prevent sediment from washing away and to protect local waters. Students observed how techniques such as sediment barriers, stabilized entrances, and vegetative cover all work together to reduce soil loss and keep construction sites stable.

Kean University students enrolled in Professor Becky Laboy's Principles of Environmental Soil Science course, along with staff from OCSCD and SJRC&D. Pictured left to right: Dylan Suarez, Danella Funk, Joshua Dovey, Willow Rehak, Amber Newell, Mikayla Donaldson, Kevin Billy, Nick Mazur, Mateo Gonzalez, Ben Okun, Brittany Moore (OCSCD), Ben Hayden (OCSCD), Eileen Miller (SJRC&D).



One memorable stop was the newly upgraded stormwater basin at Lakewood Township Department of Public Works. This basin was planted with a mix of native grasses and flowers chosen to improve the soil and enhance stormwater infiltration. Two special habitat islands containing woody plants were added, surrounded by seven-foot-tall deer fencing to ensure they could grow successfully. Trees are also vital in managing stormwater—they can absorb between 10 and 150 gallons of water daily.

The District emphasized the significance of public education and engagement through signage. Project signage includes “before and after” photos of the basins’ transformation from overgrown sites to thriving green infrastructure. Close-up images of native vegetation planted during the retrofit process highlight species that support pollinators, stabilize soil, and enhance infiltration. Clear graphics and engaging text help visitors visualize how retrofitted basins filter pollutants, slow stormwater flow, and enhance groundwater recharge.

Experiences like this field trip allow students to learn directly from professionals, gain practical hands-on skills, and consider possible careers for the future. The Ocean County Soil Conservation District encourages community partnerships to support education and conservation of our precious soil and water resources.



Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Standards

The purpose of the **Standard for Sediment Barrier** is to intercept and detain small amounts of sediment from unprotected areas of limited extent. Sediment Barriers are almost always established at the limits of a site's proposed disturbance area. These barriers specialize in preventing eroding soil from escaping a site and tracking onto roads, forests, neighboring properties and other offsite areas. These barriers come in different forms like silt fences, silt socks and staked haybales.

The **Temporary Vegetative Cover for Soil Stabilization Standard** prevents offsite environmental damage. Establishment of temporary vegetative cover for soil stabilization is required on soils exposed for periods of 2 – 6 months which are not being graded, not under active construction, or not scheduled for permanent seeding within 60 days. These soils have the potential to cause offsite environmental damage when eroded by wind and rain. The temporary vegetative cover slows the overland movement of stormwater runoff, increases infiltration and retains soil and nutrients on site, protecting streams or other stormwater conveyances. The temporary vegetative cover reduces damage to the soil and to the environment until permanent stabilization is accomplished.



The temporary vegetative cover is installed by creating a seedbed, selecting an appropriate grass species, broadcasting the seed onto the soil, covering the seed with mulch, and anchoring the mulch. (Shown in the photo is straw mulch covered with netting.)

The **Stabilized Construction Access Standard** reduces the trafficking or flow of sediment, oils, greases and diesel fuels onto paved roads or other impervious surfaces. This prevents pollutants from migrating into offsite drainage systems where they may enter directly into a waterway. By preventing or minimizing the tracking of sediments and other pollutants onto paved areas, significant reduction in construction related hydrocarbon pollution will also be controlled.



The **Storm Sewer Inlet Protection Standard** benefits local water quality. A temporary bag and settling facility is installed in a storm sewer inlet. It intercepts and retains sediment, preventing its entrance into the storm sewer system. Other debris such as vegetative matter and litter are also prevented from entering the storm sewer system. The bag is removed when the area draining toward the inlet has been stabilized. These controls can be used along curblines in streets and may also use a wood frame and stone berm as a filter.





Tuscan Terrace Stormwater Basin retrofitted with native grasses and perennials.



Before: Stormwater Basin near Lakewood BlueClaws Stadium being seeded with native species using the Kasco Versa No-Till Drill. In 2021, the project saw its first seeding operation of a stormwater basin at FirstEnergy Park, home to the Lakewood Blue Claws. Native grasses such as Big Bluestem, Switchgrass, Seaside Goldenrod and Swamp Milkweed were planted using the Kasco Versa-Drill, a no-till seeder that protects soil while ensuring proper seed germination. These plants were selected for their deep root systems, which help stabilize soil, improve water infiltration, and provide important habitat for pollinators like monarch butterflies and songbirds.



After: Stormwater Basin near Lakewood BlueClaws Stadium showing successful growth of native grasses and perennials. Funding for the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project was provided through a Federal 319(h) Water Quality Restoration grant (Grant # WM20-008) awarded by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to:

- South Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council in partnership with Ocean County Soil Conservation District
- Camden County Soil Conservation District
- Lakewood Township Department of Public Works.

The State Conservation Connection

The State Of New Jersey Oversees Conservation And Preservation Of New Jersey's Agricultural Resources Through Two Committees And Offers A Cost Share Program To Help Steward Preserved Agricultural Lands

State Soil Conservation Committee

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) administers policies and programs to conserve and develop the State's soil, water, and related natural resources on agricultural and urban lands through NJDA's State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) and the 13 local soil conservation districts (SCDs) in partnership with other federal and state agencies. Department staff address issues including nonpoint source pollution control, animal waste management and water resources. The SSCC establishes standards and oversees the SCDs' implementation of programs regulating land disturbances for the control of soil erosion, sedimentation, and authorizes stormwater discharges and management in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's NPDES permit authorities.

The NJ State Soil Conservation Committee and NJ Soil Conservation Districts conduct review and inspection of construction sites throughout New Jersey to ensure compliance with stormwater and erosion control measures.



Each year local conservation districts host Local Work Group meetings throughout the State. Residents, agricultural landowners and conservation agency representatives meet to prioritize conservation needs at the county level. A summary report is shared with state and federal policy makers.

NJ ManureLink Project, Hopeful to Improve Manure Management

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources, successfully concluded a two-year project funded through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG). The initiative consisted of two primary components designed to enhance nutrient management and advance sustainable agricultural practices statewide.



The first component involved the development of an on-line listing service to connect agricultural producers with individuals and businesses seeking compost or manure. This platform, now available as <https://njmanurelink.rutgers.edu>, facilitates efficient exchange of organic materials, reduces waste, and supports the beneficial reuse of nutrients.

The second component focused on outreach and education. In partnership with the New Jersey Composting Council (NJCC), NJDA delivered both webinar-based instruction and hands-on training to provide farmers and other stakeholders with practical guidance on nutrient management, composting techniques, and the integration of recycled nutrients into on-farm operations. As part of these efforts, two webinars were conducted with a combined total of 47 participants, and two field days were held, drawing 45 attendees.



Development of the NJ ManureLink website was completed in collaboration with Rutgers University's Office of Research and Analytics. The platform officially launched in January 2024 and currently hosts more than 266 registered users. Collectively, these efforts advance the Department's broader goals of improving soil health, promoting environmentally responsible practices, and strengthening New Jersey's agricultural community.



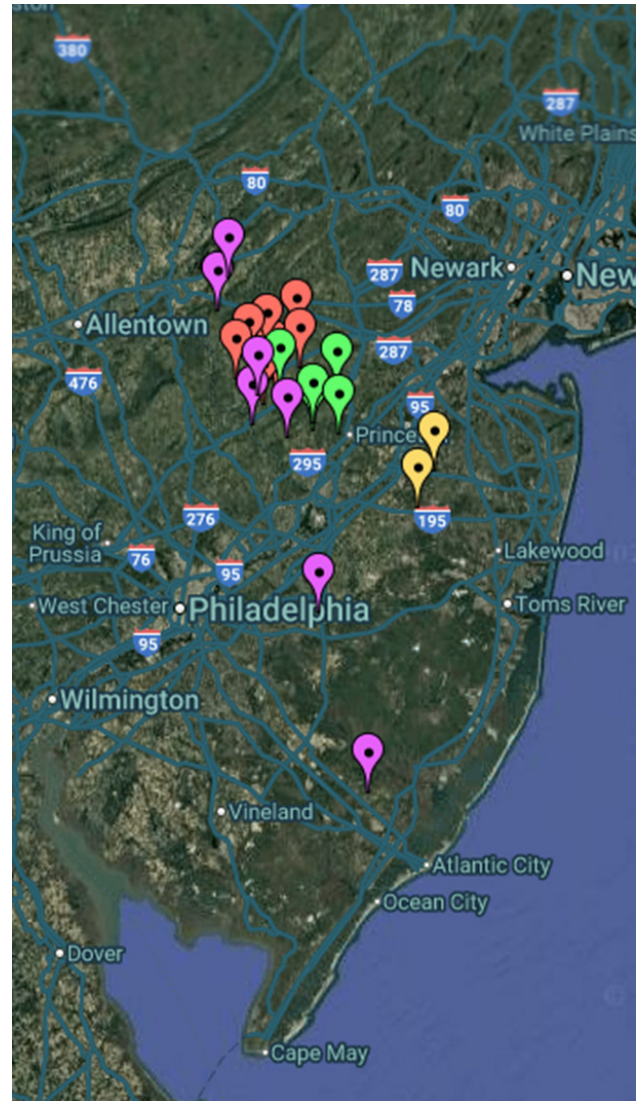
Throughout the project, NJDA staff also identified several challenges faced by small farms in adopting on-site composting and nutrient best management practices (BMPs). Chief among these barriers was the need for technical support to develop appropriate infrastructure, including manure storage areas and composting pads. To address this need, NJDA partnered with the Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority (SCMUA) to develop practical guidance, conceptual layouts, and design templates to assist small livestock and equine operations in constructing facilities that support efficient on-site nutrient management.

NJDA Nutrient Management Assistance Grant

In March 2025, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources, established a pilot grant program to assist producers statewide in enhancing the implementation of Animal Waste Management Plans (AWMPs), improving the efficient utilization of on-site nutrients, and adopting best management practices (BMPs) to mitigate potential water quality impacts. Many farms lack the specialized equipment needed to effectively transport and apply manure, creating barriers to proper nutrient management. The pilot program was designed to address these challenges by providing a reimbursement of up to \$25,000 per award to support the purchase and maintenance of manure spreaders, facilitate the establishment of community use programs that allow equipment sharing among neighboring farms, and promote BMP adoption among equipment users.

NJDA received, reviewed, and ranked 14 applications, ultimately awarding four grants in August 2025. Awardees demonstrated a clear commitment to acquiring appropriate equipment, developing community use structures to maximize shared access, and providing technical support and educational resources to ensure proper operation and adherence to nutrient management BMPs. Geographic distribution of funds was also a critical consideration in the selection process to ensure balanced support across the state.

The program is structured as a two-year pilot program and requires participating farms to develop on-farm nutrient budgets. Awardees will report progress and outcomes to NJDA through semi-annual reporting. Farms selected for participation include Fairgrown Farms in Pennington Township, Mercer County; The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ); Walnut Grove Farms in Manalapan Township, Monmouth County; and Zeng Farms in Ringoes Township, Hunterdon County.



Map showing the geographic distribution of NJDA Nutrient Management Assistance Grant awards across New Jersey. Four grants were awarded in August 2025 to applicants who demonstrated strong commitment to equipment acquisition, community use programs, and technical support, ensuring balanced support statewide.

In one day, one cow can create up to 150 pounds of manure. That's up to more than 20 tons each year from a single dairy cow—nature's original recycler at work. Then comes responsibility. Proper nutrient management ensures manure is stored, handled, and applied in ways that protect our waterways, prevent runoff, and keep soils healthy. When managed well, this natural resource becomes a powerful fertilizer that supports sustainable agriculture and a cleaner environment.

State Agriculture Development Committee

New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) leads in the preservation of New Jersey's farmland with over 250,000 acres preserved and promotes innovative approaches to maintaining the viability of agriculture. The SADC administers the Farmland Preservation Program, providing grants to counties, municipalities and nonprofit groups to fund the purchase of development easements on farmland; directly purchasing farms and development easements from landowners; and offering grants to landowners in the program to fund wildlife fencing and soil and water conservation projects. It also administers the Right to Farm Program, oversees the Transfer of Development Rights Bank, and operates the Farm Link Program, which helps connect farm owners with farmers seeking access to farmland and farming opportunities.

Wildlife Fencing Grants

The Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources within the New Jersey Department of Agriculture administers the Wildlife Fencing Program, which provides cost-sharing grant assistance to eligible farmers across New Jersey. The program offers funding to support the installation of wildlife fencing on unpreserved farms to protect agricultural products from damage caused by deer, bear, and other wildlife. Eligible farm owners, operators, or tenants may receive up to 50 percent in matching funds, not to exceed a total of \$50,000 per approved application. The program is conducted in accordance with N.J.S.A. 4:20-6.

Since the launch of the NJDA's Wildlife Fencing Grant Program in 2022, a total of 31 fencing projects have been completed, resulting in approximately 894 acres of New Jersey's farmland being fenced. Through this program, NJDA has reimbursed farmers more than \$529,000 for fencing installation costs. In calendar year 2025 alone, NJDA received 22 approved applications, of which 15 of those projects have already been completed.



Deer fencing protecting grapevines, Pittsgrove Township, Salem County.

Farm County	Type of Fence Deer or Wildlife	Total Applications	Acres to be Fenced	Approximate linear feet of fencing installed	Award Amount Given
Atlantic	Deer	4	518.50	13,090	\$53,953.80
Atlantic Total		4	518.50	13,090	\$53,953.80
Bergen	Deer	1	18.00	5,000	\$27,946.00
Bergen Total		1	18.00	5,000	\$27,946.00
Cumberland	Deer	2	15.47	4,588	\$23,337.00
Cumberland Total		2	15.47	4,588	\$23,337.00
Gloucester	Deer	1	32.00	5,887	\$22,250.00
Gloucester Total		1	32.00	5,887	\$22,250.00
Hunterdon	Deer	7	161.63	26,050	\$164,296.24
Hunterdon Total		7	161.63	26,050	\$164,296.24
Mercer	Deer	1	4.50	3,150	\$15,766.00
Mercer Total		1	4.50	3,150	\$15,766.00
Monmouth	Deer	6	85.19	19,565	\$79,200.22
Monmouth Total		6	85.19	19,565	\$79,200.22
Morris	Deer	3	26.22	8,016	\$73,794.00
	Other	1	4.00	1,700	\$10,514.66
Morris Total		4	30.22	9,716	\$84,308.66
Somerset	Deer	2	20.00	4,890	\$31,069.50
Somerset Total		2	20.00	4,890	\$31,069.50
Sussex	Deer	3	8.50	3,950	\$27,287.00
Sussex Total		3	8.50	3,950	\$27,287.00
Grand Total		31	894.01	95,886	\$529,414.42

2025 Approved Applications

Farm County	Eligibility Status	Total		Acres to be Fenced	Approximate linear feet of fencing installed	Sum of Actual Award Amount
		Applications	Completed Projects			
Atlantic	Eligible	1	1	379.00	6,300	27,380.00
Bergen	Eligible	1	1	18.00	5,000	27,946.00
Burlington	Eligible	4	1	632.74	27,799	
Camden	Eligible	1	1	21.00	3,600	
Cumberland	Eligible	1	1	2.00	1,138	6,471.00
Hunterdon	Eligible	6	3	108.93	17,178	79,289.00
Mercer	Eligible	1	1	4.50	3,150	15,766.00
Monmouth	Eligible	4	3	50.31	13,085	25,274.22
Morris	Eligible	2	2	15.62	5,241	38,041.00
Sussex	Eligible	1	1	1.50	625	5,325.00
Grand Total		22	15	1,233.60	83,116	225,492.22

Delivering Conservation in New Jersey

Fiscal Year 2025



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) continues to put Farmers First by ensuring farmers, forest owners and private landowners are at the heart of every aspect of our mission, operations and technology. Our focus is on making life easier, more profitable and more rewarding for the American farmer and to put American dollars to work on the land.

2025 marked a pivotal year for NRCS, both nationwide and here in the Garden State. NRCS worked with New Jersey producers to implement conservation practices on more than 41,000 acres. See table for more details on implementation of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) in New Jersey.

America's agriculture producers will continue to be the focus in 2026 as additional assistance is made possible by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), the largest long-term investment in NRCS conservation programs in decades. The OBBBA provides \$34 billion beginning in fiscal year 2026 through fiscal year 2031. Additionally, NRCS offered new opportunities in 2026, including the new Regenerative Pilot Program. These investments in conserving our land and vital resources help ensure American agriculture continues to thrive now and for future generations.

NRCS also invested in communities to help them prepare for or recover from natural disasters. In New Jersey, NRCS invested \$7.9 million in the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, \$30,000 in the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program and \$81,000 in the Watershed Rehabilitation Program. Beginning in fiscal year 2026, the OBBBA will provide \$150 million annually for Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) programs.

New Jersey Contact:

Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, (732) 537-6040, julie.hawkins@usda.gov — "Across New Jersey, our conservation partners and producers are proving that working lands and healthy natural resources go hand in hand."

A Blooming Partnership with NRCS

Moonshot Farm, a charming flower farm in Mercer County, is blooming in more ways than one. Thanks to the support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the farm is making impressive strides in sustainability and agricultural innovation.

Launched in 2019 by Rebecca Kutzer-Rice and Mark Ginsberg, Moonshot Farm is a small operation—just under 10 acres—but it has a big impact. The farm grows over 150 varieties of flowers and serves both local markets and nearby cities like New York and Philadelphia. Business has been thriving, with sales doubling every year.

"Flowers feed the soul," says Rebecca. "There's a real hunger for local flowers, and I love providing that to our community."



Central to Moonshot's growth is its partnership with NRCS, which has helped fund several key initiatives. One of the most exciting projects is a new composting system that will revolutionize how the farm handles waste. Funded through the NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program, the system allows Moonshot to recycle potting and organic materials to reduce its reliance on expensive potting soil.

Over the past four years, the farm received funding for five high tunnels through NRCS's EQIP program. These tunnels allow the farm to grow flowers year-round, increasing plant health and vigor by extending their growing season and supporting production.

"USDA programs have enabled our farm to build critical infrastructure while enhancing our sustainability," says Rebecca.

Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.

CONSERVATION IN NEW JERSEY				
PROGRAM	OBLIGATIONS	ACRES	CONTRACTS	APPLICATIONS RECEIVED
EQIP	\$ 13,378,809	33,582	257	502
CSP	\$ 1,921,132	7,476	75	125
RCPP	\$ 551,000	2.25	9	10
AMA	\$ 250,000	31	3	46
ACEP-WRE	\$ 82,049*	-	-	12
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 16,182,990	41,091.25	344	695

* for existing projects

Top 5 EQIP Practices in New Jersey

- 1. Cover Crop
- 2. Obstruction Removal
- 3. Tree/Shrub Establishment
- 4. Forest Management Plan
- 5. Fence

NEW JERSEY OBLIGATIONS BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT FY 2025		
	CSP	EQIP
District 1	\$206,682	\$969,320
District 2	\$532,917	\$2,795,552
District 3	\$142,260	\$1,348,829
District 4	\$77,441	\$3,312
District 5	\$261,609	\$3,018,696
District 6	-	-
District 7	\$456, 462	\$4,703,182
District 8	-	-
District 9	-	-
District 10	\$60,000	-
District 11	\$93,438	\$270,836
District 12	\$90,323	\$269,082
Grand Total	\$1,921,132	\$13,378,809

Note: Congressional district data for ACEP is unavailable.

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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

NJPMC Celebrates 60 Years of Developing Plant Solutions for Conservation Purposes

Cape May, N.J. -- The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in New Jersey, in partnership with the DelAtlantic Conservation District, celebrated the New Jersey Plant Materials Center's (NJPMC) 60th anniversary on Sept. 25, 2025. This long-term effort of plant evaluation and technology development has been strengthened by partnerships, a theme that was stressed during the event and displayed by the crowd of attendees representing over 20 partner organizations. The NJPMC has formed and nurtured internal partnerships with other PMCs as well as external partnerships with other federal and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and commercial nurseries working towards common goals. The cooperative efforts of these partnerships have been a critical element leading to the development of 15 conservation plant releases, numerous technical publications, and regular training activities.

The event opened with a morning of presentations and a series of guest speakers including Julie Hawkins (USDA-NRCS, NJ State Conservationist), Kasey Taylor (USDA-NRCS, Northeast Regional Conservationist, Frank Minch (NJ Dept of Agriculture), Bob Andrzejczak (USDA Farm Service Agency), Allen Carter (NJ Farm Bureau), Joseph Lomax (DelAtlantic Conservation District Board of Supervisors, Vice-Chairman), and John Englert (USDA-NRCS, National Plant Materials Program Leader).

Just before lunch, a ceremonial signing of the finalized conservation release package took place to officially release [Hamer Germplasm sea oats](#). Named after retired NJPMC Manager, Don Hamer, the in-person signing of this conservation plant release was more emotionally charged than most with Mr. Hamer in attendance and available to provide his personal remarks on the release's path to development.

The afternoon consisted of several tour options. A field tour was offered to view and learn about conservation plant production plots and field studies/demonstrations. Guided tours of the greenhouse and seed cleaning facilities were also offered.



Field day attendees are treated to wagon ride tour of conservation plant production plots and field studies/demonstrations.



Field day attendees are treated to a morning of presentations and guest speakers.



John Englert (left) and Julie Hawkins (right) sign the Hamer Germplasm sea oats release documents.



Chris Miller provides background on the development of Hamer Germplasm sea oats and how its production is managed during the field tour.

Release of Hamer Germplasm Sea Oats

The development of [Hamer Germplasm sea oats](#) is a saga spanning over four decades and encompassing the efforts of more than 20 NRCS employees and Earth Team volunteers. It is a tale of adventures, such as a fierce standoff with bulldozers preparing to bury trial plots for a dune reconstruction project. Other plots decimated by natural sand accumulation/burial and wildlife herbivory add catastrophic elements to the story ramping up the drama. Above all the setbacks and challenges though, it presents the character of a man who was passionate enough about plant materials development to pursue a sea oats conservation plant release with undying tenacity and persistence.



Don Hamer inspects a sea oats trial planting.

Hamer Germplasm is named after Donald Hamer, retired New Jersey Plant Materials Center Manager (1985-1995) for his tireless dedication to the development of a sea oats conservation plant release. Although Mr. Hamer retired from the Plant Materials Program in 1995, his passion for plant materials work burned on and he returned as an Earth Team volunteer (2010-present) to help finish the work that was started during his NRCS career.

The project began with seed collection trips from natural stands in Virginia and North Carolina conducted from 1981-1984. Field trials were conducted until 1995 when the project was shelved indefinitely. The project was reinitiated in 2009 when five individual plants that survived the trial plantings in Avalon, NJ were rediscovered. After additional testing, Hamer Germplasm was officially released on September 25, 2025 during the New Jersey Plant Material Center's 60th Anniversary celebration.

Hamer Germplasm displayed a statistically significant shorter average height than NC and SC commercially available sources of sea oats it was compared to in a replicated in situ trial planting. The shorter stature is a desirable trait for coastal communities and property owners seeking low growing dune vegetation options that do not impede ocean views.

As a part of the conservation plant release process, two new publications, [Release Brochure](#) and [Notice of Release](#), were developed and published. Additionally, the existing [Sea Oats Plant Guide](#) was updated to include the newly released conservation plant release.



Hamer Germplasm sea oats on a back dune in Avalon, New Jersey.



The Hamer Germplasm Sea Oats re-discovered trial plantings in situ, Avalon, New Jersey. The seeds, shown in detail, below right, are responsible for the shorter stature plants, which aid in dune erosion prevention. Sea oats may be used to ameliorate dune systems suffering from American beach grass (*ammophila breviligulate*) die off. Each spikelet is composed of ten to twelve wind pollinated florets.



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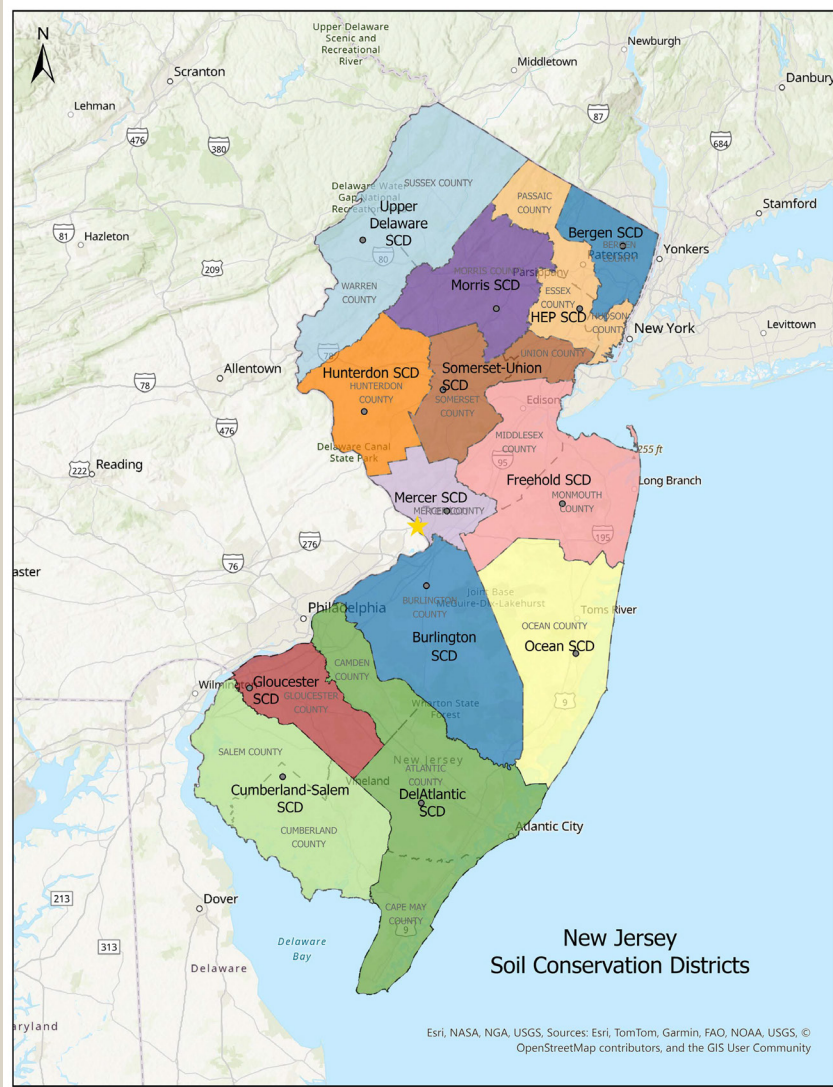
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